

Cassius Maber *921066*
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A
L E T T E R
FROM
THE ABBÉ RAYNAL
TO THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE,
ON THE SUBJECT OF THE
R E V O L U T I O N,
AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES WHICH
LED TO IT.

Reprinted from a correct Copy of the original Letter read in
the Assembly on the 31st of May, 1791; and now first
published in England; with a faithful Translation, and some
prefatory Observations, by the Translator of Rousseau's
Social Contract.

WITH THE ORIGINAL FRENCH.
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE DECLARATION
OF
THE CHEVALIER BINTINAYE,
ON THE RESIGNATION OF HIS COMMISSION AND
PENSION.

L O N D O N:
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P R E F A C E.

THE name and reputation of the Abbé Raynal have been long known to the world, and his works read with avidity. They have contributed, in no small degree, to disseminate those philosophical politics which led to the revolution in France: and to them, in conjunction with the other emanations of

the Encyclopædian School, all the present romantic speculations in government are attributable.

As the great patriarch of the dogmas of this school the Abbe must be perfectly acquainted with them ; consequently their best interpreter ; and his authority the strongest that can possibly be produced to prove how far the French revolutionists have exceeded, in their extravagant scheme of reformation, even the wildest ideas of their theoretical preceptors.

Considering the Abbe Raynal in
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this point of view, his Letter, lately addressed to the National Assembly, and through them to the people of France, on the subject of a revolution which attracts the attention of all Europe, must be an important body of evidence. The facts stated in it will appear doubly convincing when we reflect, that the writer must be supposed to feel a strong partiality for the disciples of doctrines which he himself was one of the first to propagate; and to come forward, not as a rigid, not as a willing witness, against men who

profess to be followers of his principles.

When these knights-errant in the cause of democracy first sallied forth on their great adventure of reformation, the Abbe Raynal was **filled with hope and with joy*, in anticipating the wonders they were to achieve. Shortly after, when he found them all, like so many Don Quixottes, venting their rage on things of the utmost utility; tearing to pieces the great machine of

* See the Abbé Raynal's Letter for the passages given in italics throughout the preface.

government, as the Don endeavoured to destroy the windmill, under an idea, that it was a giant of prerogative ; and hewing down multitudes of innocent, nay useful laws, as he slaughtered the flock of sheep, supposing them a host of warriors armed against the liberties of mankind, the Abbé became ashamed of his disciples ; and, perhaps touched with regret for the miseries in which the French nation was involved by the followers, or, as he says, by the misconceivers of his principles ; finding *religion, law, royal authority, and public order,*

call upon philosophy and reason to restore them to the great society of the French nation, he is deeply concerned, and laments his being one of those who had furnished arms to the hand of licentiousness.

If, indeed, it has been by the misconception of the doctrines promulgated by the Abbé and his contemporary philosophers, that the decree-makers, for we cannot call them law-givers, of France, have drawn such evils upon their country; *have reduced themselves to such a situation, that absolute destruction*
can

can only be avoided by returning through the paths by which they have advanced, it proves the danger of broaching opinions, and disseminating principles, which the multitude cannot understand; which by inflaming men's passions, encouraging their natural love of novelty, and giving a seeming sanction to the exercise of that factious discontented spirit which is ever prompt for innovation, they may produce the greatest possible evils, while they seek only to awaken inquiry. If the representatives of the
people

people of France have adhered to the principles of their political apostles, and the anarchy which now threatens destruction to the state, is a consequence of that adherence, it proves the danger, the almost certain ruin, a people must incur, by chusing representatives whose light minds are captivated by every popular novelty ; who have not judgment to distinguish between a wild speculative theory, and a practical system of government.

The Abbé Raynal is not the only person of distinguished character

racter who has published to the world his sentiments of the French revolutionists. The Chevalier de la Bintinaye, in his Declaration, on resigning his pension, speaks of them with all the generous indignation of a brave soldier, who feels for the distresses of his king and his country. The gallantry of M. de la Bintinaye in the engagement between the *Serveillante* frigate and the *Quebec*, in one of the most bloody actions of the last war, won him the esteem of many of his generous enemies in the British fleet; and he
 before

before possessed that of the whole French navy. The brave Captain Farmer unfortunately fell in the action, and M. Bintinaye lost an arm, taken off at the shoulder; the wound of which he speaks so lightly in his Declaration.

There is another person, M. Neckar, whose evidence must carry with it great authority, who, by his conduct, though hitherto not by his pen, arraigns in the strongest manner the proceedings of the French National Assembly.

Attached

Attached to those principles, of which the Abbé Raynal was one of the earliest dogmatists, Mr. Neckar had the honour of being called, in the gay morning of the revolution, under the auspices of its mighty achievers, to resume the direction of the finances of France : but he soon perceived the insufficiency of philosophy to supply the place of laws and taxation : and the tumultuous excesses of the people, emancipated from all law ; and the deplorable state of the treasury, from the abolition of its natural resources ;

—a state

—a state rendered still more desperate by the consequent failure of public credit, soon drove him from a country which he and his brother philosophers had hailed but a few months before as the New Jerusalem of Liberty.

Disappointed, chagrined, Mr. Neckar fled, some believe to avoid the lamp-iron, that instrument always so conveniently ready at hand to execute the summary *justice* of the philosophical mob of Paris; and, taking refuge in his native mountains of Swisserland, became
the

the prey of that gloomy despondence which so often awaits the overthrow of chimerical projects.

An elegant and justly celebrated writer of our own country, who, a short time since visited Mr. Neckar at his retreat near Luifanne, found him thoughtful, dejected, the victim of melancholy which nothing could divert. Our accomplished countryman, feeling for the depression of his host, urged him to dissipate his thoughts by reading, writing, gardening, building, or any other of those employments which
occupy

occupy the rural leisure of elegant minds: but Mr. Neckar was not to be roused; he could not be diverted from the subject which absorbed his attention; and when solicited to seek amusements, his reply was, “ Je ne sçais penser qu’au
“ coup de vent qui nous a tous
“ prosterne*.”

The deep affliction of Mr. Neckar at the event of a revolution, from which he and many other well-meaning weak theorists, be-

* “ I can think only of the hurricane
“ that has laid us prostrate.”

wildered

wildered in the dreams of speculative philosophy, entertained such golden hopes, is one of the strongest possible proofs of the regret which now attends all those who, under an idea, that it would promote the happiness of the French nation, favoured that extravagant scheme. They see, with horror, the situation of the country, and they accuse themselves as the authors of its distresses.

The chagrin in which Mr. Nekar is now plunged, and which is here spoken of from undoubted

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autho-

authority, cannot be attributed to the regrets of disappointed ambition. Before the revolution took place, Mr. Neckar had been Minister of the French finances; had been dismissed; and had retired to his present retreat, with a mind unclouded by melancholy, and a heart uncorroded by remorse. He could then find pleasure in conversation, in reading; and it was in the interval between his dismissal by the King, and his recal by the triumphant revolutionists, that he wrote his Observations on the Importance

portance of Religious Opinions, and his Treatise on the Finances of France. So different was the state of mind enjoyed by this gentleman, before and since the revolution.

But to return to the Abbé Raynal's Letter.

The opinion he expresses to the National Assembly, of the clubs now subsisting in France, deserves the particular attention of this country. To the machinations of these self-created bodies, which he compares to *volcanos vomiting forth flaming lava*, the Abbé attributes

much of that anarchy which now threatens the final overthrow of France ; and it is worthy of observation, that Rousseau, corroborating his opinion by that of Machieval, speaks of such partial assemblies with the same disapprobation, in his celebrated work of the Social Contract: a work which, though generally looked upon as the sacred scripture of the French revolutionists, has shared the fate of all the other philosophical tracts which they have thought proper to consult, in having only its wildest theories

theories adopted, and no regard paid to those sound observations which must convince cool-minded men, that if there are such abuses as call for a reform, the means of effecting it is not by overturning government, and substituting anarchy and popular tyranny in its place.

In another of Rousseau's works, his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, written several years after the *Social Contract*, when the author's judgment was more mature, and his opinions more settled; and which was intended as

the sketch of a practical, as the former was of a merely speculative, system, he shews himself an enemy to all violent reformati^ons ; for, addressing Count Wielhorski, he says,
* “ I do not say, that it is proper
“ to leave things in their present
“ state ; but I say, they must be

* “ Je ne dis pas qu’il faille laisser les choses
“ dans l’état où elles sont ; mais je dis, qu’il
“ n’y faut toucher qu’ avec une circonspec-
“ tion extrême. En ce moment, on est plus
“ frappé des abus que des avantages. Le
“ tems viendra, je le crains, qu’on sentira
“ mieux ces avantages, et malheureusement
“ ce sera quand on les aura perdus.”

“ touched

“ touched with extreme circum-
“ spection. You are at this mo-
“ ment more struck with the abuses
“ than the advantages of your go-
“ vernment: the time will come,
“ I am afraid, when these advan-
“ tages will be better known; but
“ unhappily it will be when they
“ are lost.”

This passage carries the greater force with it, when we consider, that Rousseau speaks with reference to the government of Poland, of which he has just before said:

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“ In

* “ In reading the history of the
“ government of Poland, we can
“ scarcely comprehend how a state,
“ so strangely constructed, could
“ subsist so long. A vast body,
“ formed of a great number of dead
“ members, and a small number of

* “ En lisant l'histoire du gouvernement
“ de Pologne, on a peine à comprendre com-
“ ment un état, si bisarrement constitué, a
“ pu subsister si long-tems. Un grand corps,
“ formé d'un grand nombre de membres,
“ mort, et d'un petit nombre de membres
“ défunis, dont tous les mouvemens, pres-
“ qu'indépendans les uns des autres, loin
“ d'avoir une fin commune, s'entre-détrisent
“ mutuellement, qui s'agite beaucoup pour
“ ne rien faire, qui ne peut faire aucune ré-
“ sistance, à quiconque veut l'entamer, &c.”
“ dis-

“ disunited ones; whose movements,
 “ almost wholly independent of
 “ each other, are so far from having
 “ one common end, that they mu-
 “ tually destroy each other’s de-
 “ signs: which are continually agi-
 “ tated, and perform nothing: which
 “ can make no resistance against
 “ those who may attack them,
 “ &c.”

Such is the opinion which Rouf-
 feau avows respecting innovation:
 nor is it here lightly expressed, but
 given seriously to Count Wielhorski,
 who

who had requested his advice in the regenerating of Poland.

There is another passage in the same work, which deserves to be noticed. One would almost suppose from it, that the author possessed the power of looking into futurity, and had his eyes fixt on the people of France, as they now appear, when he wrote it; for the horrid, but too faithful portrait of that nation, drawn by the Abbé Raynal, in his Letter to the National Assembly, where he represents *Licentiousness marching in triumph*
under

under the ensigns of liberty, presents to our view the very people who, drawn together by a spirit of faction, enslaved by their passions, and in the act of exercising the most unlimited, the most tyrannical despotism, pretend to seek the establishment of that liberty of which they have no idea. * “ *Liberty*,”
says

* “ La liberté est un aliment de bon suc,
“ mais de forte digestion ; il faut des stomacs
“ bien sains pour le supporter. Je ris de ces
“ peuples avilis qui, se laissant ameuter par
“ des liguers, osent parler de liberté sans
“ même

says the author of the Social Contract, addressing himself to Count Wielhorski, “ *is wholesome and substantial food, but hard of digestion; and it requires very healthy stomachs*

“ même en avoir l'idée, et le cœur plein de
“ tous les vices des esclaves, s'imaginent que,
“ pour être libre, il suffit d'être des mutins.
“ Fiere et sainte Liberté ! si ces pauvres gens
“ pouvoient, te connoître ; s'ils favoient
“ à quel prix on t'acquiere et te conserve ;
“ s'ils sentoient combien tes loix sont plus
“ austeres que n'est dur le joug des tyrans ;
“ leurs foibles ames, esclaves des passions
“ qu'il faudroit étouffer, te craindroient
“ plus cent fois que la servitude ; ils te
“ fuiroient avec effroi, comme un fardeau
“ prêt à les écraser !”

to bear it. I laugh at those corrupt people, who, suffering themselves to be bound together by faction, dare to talk of liberty, without having any idea of it; who, with hearts abounding in all the vices of slavery, imagine that to be licentious is to be free. August and sacred Liberty! if these poor people could but understand thee: if they could know at what a price they must purchase and preserve thee; if they could be sensible how much more austere thy laws are found, than the yoke of the harshest tyrants, their weak
 minds,

minds, enslaved by passions which they are obliged to stifle, would fear thee a hundred times more than servitude; they would fly thee with terror, as a burden, under which they must be crushed!"

A
L E T T E R
FROM THE
A B B É R A Y N A L
TO THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF FRANCE.

GENTLEMEN,

I RETURNED to this capital,
after a long absence, with my
heart and my attention attached to
you; and you would now see me at
the feet of your august assembly, if
my age and infirmities would permit
me; if I could speak to you without
being too much affected by the great
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things which you have achieved, and those which still remain for you to achieve, before you can establish, in this agitated country, the peace, the liberty, and the happiness, which you hope to procure for us.

Do not imagine, Gentlemen, that I am one of those who are insensible to the indefatigable zeal, the talents, the knowledge, and the courage which you have displayed in the course of your immense labours: but a sufficient number of pens have been already employed on this subject, and your title to the esteem of the nation has been sufficiently impressed upon men's minds. As for me, whether I am considered in the light of a citizen using a citizen's right of petitioning, or whether, giving free
scope

scope to my gratitude, you will permit an old friend of liberty to make the return due to you for the protection with which he has been honoured, I entreat you not to reject important truths. I had the fortitude long ago to talk to kings of their duty; allow me now to talk to the people of their errors; and to the people's representatives of the danger with which all are threatened.

I am deeply concerned, and I avow my concern to you, at the disorders and the crimes which have spread affliction over this empire. Alas! is it then possible that I must reflect with horror upon my having been one of those who, by shewing a generous indignation against arbitrary

power, have perhaps furnished arms to the hand of licentiousness? and shall religion, law, royal authority, and public order, call upon philosophy and reason to restore the bonds which united them to the great society of the French nation—as if our efforts to reform abuses, and restore the rights of the people, and the duty of the prince, had broken these bonds of union? No, they were never broken by us: we never held up the bold conceptions of philosophy as rigorous rules to direct the acts of the legislature; neither can you attribute to any error on our part, what has resulted from a false interpretation of our principles. And yet, ready as I now am to descend into the darkness of the tomb, and
to

to quit this immense family, whose welfare I have so ardently desired, with what do I see myself surrounded? With religious troubles, civil dissensions; contention in some, audacity and fury in others; a government enslaved by popular tyranny; the sanctuary of the law environed by turbulent men, who now dictate to, and now brave, legislation; soldiers without discipline; chiefs without authority; ministers without means; a king, the first friend of his people, plunged into the bitterness of anguish; outraged, menaced, stripped of all authority; and the public power existing only in clubs, where coarse and ignorant men presume to decide on all political questions.

Such, Gentlemen, be assured of it,

such is the true situation of France ; and I am perhaps the only man who would dare to tell you the unwelcome truth : but I dare, because I feel it to be my duty ; because I verge upon my eightieth year ; because I shall never be accused of regretting the ancient system ; because the sighs I breathe for the desolation of the Gallic church, will never be supposed to come from the heart of a fanatical priest ; because, while I regard the re-establishment of legal authority as our only means of salvation, I shall never be thought the partizan of despotism—never be thought to crouch and expect favours from it ; and because, when I arraign before you those writers who have set the kingdom in a flame, and perverted the minds of
 3 the

people, I shall never be accused as not knowing the value of the liberty of the press.

Alas! I was full of hope and joy when I beheld you laying the foundation of public felicity, pursuing all abuses—proclaiming all our rights—and subjecting to the same laws, to one uniform system, all the different parts of this empire. My eyes were filled with tears when I perceived the vilest and most profligate men employed as instruments of an expedient revolution; when I saw the holy affection of patriotism prostituted to iniquity, and Licentiousness marching in triumph under the ensigns of liberty. Terror was mingled with my just concern, when I found all the springs which constitute the

grand machine of government broken and shivered ; and impotent barriers substituted for the necessity of an active and restraining force.

Every where have I sought for the traces of that central authority which a great nation deposits in the hands of the monarch for its own security ; but no where is any part of that authority to be found. I have sought for the principles that protect all kinds of property, and I have seen no shadow of them any where. I have sought to discover under what habit reposes personal security, the liberty of the individual ; I have only seen the still increasing audacity of the multitude, expecting, demanding the signal of destruction, which the factions are ready to give ; and the
lovers

lovers of innovation, no less dangerous than the factious.

I have attended, Gentlemen, to those insidious voices which inspire false apprehensions in order to draw your attention from real danger ; and whose endeavour is, by instilling the most fatal suspicions, to make you pull down, one after another, every pillar of monarchical government.

Above all I have trembled when, observing in their regenerated life this people that desire to be free, I have seen them not only disregard the social virtues, humanity and justice, the only basis of true liberty, but even receive with avidity new buds of corruption, and suffer new causes of slavery to spring up around them.

Oh,

Oh, Gentlemen, what concern do I feel at seeing in the midst of the capital, in the very focal point of all knowledge, a seduced people receiving the most criminal proposals with ferocious joy ; smiling at accounts of assassination ; singing songs of triumph for their crimes as for so many victories ; stupidly provoking enemies to the revolution ; flogging it by their complaisance ; shutting their eyes to all the evils with which it is replete. For they know not, unhappy people ! they know not that in one single crime lie hidden the seeds of infinite calamities ; they laugh and dance over the ruins of their own morality, on the very brink of the abyss in which their hopes may soon be swallowed up. Such a spectacle

tacle of joy excites my deepest emotion.

Your indifference, Gentlemen, to this horrid perversion of the public mind, is the first, perhaps the only, cause of that change of sentiments which has taken place with respect to you ; and which has made the pure homage paid to your first labours give way to the adulations of corruption, and to murmurs stifled only by fear.

But with whatever fortitude the approach of my last hour may inspire me ; whatever duty may be imposed upon me by that love of liberty which I avowed before you existed ; I still experience, while addressing you, a degree of respect, a kind of awe, of which no man can divest himself when holding an immediate
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intercourse with the representatives of a great people.

Ought I to conclude here? or shall I proceed, and speak to you as posterity will speak of you? Yes, Gentlemen, I believe you worthy of being addressed in such a style.

I have meditated all my life on those ideas which you adopted in the regeneration of the kingdom. I reflected upon them at a time when, opposed by all the social institutions, by all the interests, and by all the prejudices of my country, my system appeared to me under the seducing form of a harbour where alone I could find consolation. I was not then called upon by any motive to weigh the difficulty of reducing it to practice; or the dreadful inconveniencies

veniencies attached to such abstractions, when invested with that power necessary to command both men and things; and when the passions of men, and the resistance of things, are the elements which it is necessary to combine.

Those consequences which it was neither necessary or possible that I should foresee, under the circumstances and at the time in which I *wrote*, the circumstances and the time in which you *acted* commanded you to consider and provide for; and this I think it my duty to say you have not sufficiently done.

By this single but continual fault, you have vitiated all your labours; and have reduced yourselves to such a situation, that inevitable ruin can perhaps

perhaps only be prevented by returning through the same paths by which you have advanced, or at least by advising such a retrograde course to your successors.

Are you afraid, Gentlemen, of drawing upon yourselves alone all that hate which is now directed against the altar of liberty? Such an heroic sacrifice, believe me, would not be less grateful to your minds, from the recollection that it might have been avoided.

How exalted are those men, who, leaving their country to enjoy all the good they can procure it, take and assert to themselves alone the reproaches merited for real serious evils, but for which evils they have only circumstances to accuse! I believe
you

you worthy, Gentlemen, of this honourable fate; and the belief that you are so, induces me without reserve to bring before you in review, the defects which you have mixed in the French constitution.

Called upon to be the regenerators of France, you should have considered what parts of the ancient system could be usefully preserved; and more particularly what parts ought on no terms to be abandoned.

France was a monarchy. Its extent, its wants, its manners, and its national spirit, were so many invincible obstacles which must for ever prevent the admission of the republican form of government, without a total dissolution of the state.

The monarchical power was become

come vitiated from two causes : the one was, its basis being surrounded with prejudices ; and the other, its limits being only marked by partial resistance.

To purify the principles of this power by establishing the throne on its proper foundation, the sovereignty of the people ; and to fix the bounds of its authority, by placing them in the national representation ; was the task you had to perform ; and you believe that you have accomplished it.

The energy and the continuance of the constitution depend on the equilibrium of these two powers ; in the organization of them, you should have guarded against the bent of popular opinions ; you ought not to have

have been influenced by the prevailing opinion, that the power of the Monarch should be repressed, and the rights of the people extended. By weakening, in a disproportionate degree, that which tends to annihilation; and strengthening, beyond due measure, that which will naturally increase, you must expect to experience the dreadful result of *a king without authority, and a people without a curb.*

In suffering yourselves to be led astray, by wild opinions, you have favoured the influence of the populace, and multiplied, to infinitude, the number of popular elections. Have you forgot, Gentlemen, that the frequency of elections and

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the short continuance of power in the hands of the same men, must relax the springs of government? Have you forgot that the force of government ought to be in proportion to the number of those whom it has to quiet and protect?

You have preserved the name of king: but, in the constitution you have framed, a king is not only useless, but dangerous; for you have reduced his influence to the share he can obtain by corruption. You have, as it were, invited him to contend with a constitution, which continually reminds him of what he is not and of what he may be.

This, Gentlemen, is a vice inherent in your constitution: a vice which

which must speedily destroy the whole system, if you and your successors do not hasten to extirpate it.

I shall not say any thing to you concerning those faults in the new establishment, which may result from accidental circumstances ; you must yourselves discover them. But why will you suffer an evil to exist which may destroy you ? Why, after proclaiming universal liberty of conscience, will you permit the priests to be overwhelmed with persecutions, because they will not obey your religious opinions ?

How can you allow, after consecrating the principles of personal liberty, an inquisition to exist within your bosom, which serves as a model

and a pretext for all the inferior inquiries, which a factious inquietude has disseminated through every part of the empire ?

How can you remain unalarmed at the audacity and the success of those writers who profane the name of patriotism ; who, more powerful than your own decrees, destroy continually what you have erected ? You are desirous of having a monarchical government ; these writers are unremittedly employed in rendering it odious : you seek to establish the liberty of the people ; they aim at making them the most ferocious tyrants ; you endeavour to regenerate public manners ; they proclaim the triumph of vice, and impunity to the blackest offences.

I shall

I shall not say any thing, Gentlemen, concerning your plan of finance; God forbid that I should augment the inquietudes, or diminish the hopes of the nation: the public fortune is entirely in your hands; but be assured that there will be neither taxes, credit, certain receipts, or a fixed expenditure, where the government is not powerful or respectable.

But what form of government could bear up against the new domination of clubs? You have destroyed all the corporations; and these most colossæan and most formidable of all aggregations are towering above your heads, and destroying all power but their own.

All France is, at this time, divided into two classes. The good men, the men of moderation, are dispersed, mute, petrified with consternation; while men of violent spirits rush into close contact, electrify each other, and form those tremendous volcanos which vomit so much flaming lava.

You have made a declaration of rights; and that declaration, defective if you meant to reconcile it with metaphysical abstractions, has diffused the seeds of anarchy throughout the French empire.

Hesitating perpetually between the principles, which a false shame will not allow you to modify, and the circumstances which force exceptions

ceptions from you, you always do too little for public utility, and too much according to your own doctrine. You are frequently inconsequential and impolitic, when you endeavour most to be neither the one or the other. Thus, though you have perpetuated the slavery of the blacks, your decision, respecting the people of colour*, has given an alarm to commerce, and endangered your colonies.

Believe it, Gentlemen, none of these observations escape the friends of liberty. They demand back from you the deposit of the public opinion, of which you are only

* The French style all mullattos, &c. people of colour.

the organs; organs that have no longer their true character.

Europe regards you with astonishment. Europe, which may be shaken to its foundations, by the propagation of your principles, is indignant at their extravagance. The silence of her princes may be the silence of fear; but aspire not, Gentlemen, at the fatal honour of rendering yourselves formidable, by immoderate innovations, as dangerous to you as to your neighbours. Consult once more the annals of the world: call to your assistance the wisdom of former ages, and see how many empires have perished by anarchy: it is time to put an end to that anarchy which is desolating our country: to
stop

stop the career of vengeance, seditions, and insurrections ; and to restore us to peace and confidence.

You have but one way of attaining this salutary end : revise your decrees ; reunite, and by that means, restore the powers enfeebled by disjunction ; confide to the king all the force, necessary for ensuring the power of the laws ; and above all, protect the liberty of the primary assemblies, from whence faction has driven all wise and virtuous citizens.

Do not imagine, Gentlemen, that the re-establishment of the executive power can be the work of your successors : no, they will come to the assembly, with less strength than you possess ; and they will have to
subdue

subdue that popular opinion, which you have established. It is therefore you, Gentlemen, who must re-create what you have yourselves destroyed ; or suffered others to destroy.

You have established the basis of liberty, as it is established in every rational constitution, by ensuring to the people the right of making laws, and of levying taxes ; but anarchy will soon overwhelm these eminent rights, if you do not place them under the protection of an active and vigorous government ; and despotism awaits us, if you renounce for ever the tutelar protection of royal authority.

I have collected all my strength, Gentlemen, to speak to you in the austere language of truth. Pardon,

as

as the effect of my zeal and my patriotism, whatever may appear too free in my remonstrances; and be assured of my ardent wishes for your glory, as well as of my profound respect*.

(Signed)

WILLIAM THOMAS RAYNAL.

* This letter was read in the National Assembly, on the 31st of May, 1791, while its author, four-score years old, was standing at the Bar of the Assembly, fearless of the vengeance it might draw upon him.

DECLARATION

OF THE

CHEVALIER DE LA BINTINAYE.

I AM informed, that I am the object of calumny : I must repel it. For that purpose, I shall explain my conduct, and the sentiments which dictated that conduct.

I understand that, after receiving a letter which I wrote him, Monsieur DE FLEURIEU spoke of me in
the

the assembly at the Manege*, and that it was set forth, in some miserable prints, that at the moment I declared I would never more return to France, I was soliciting a pension. Both these assertions are untrue: I have not declared that I would never return to France; I have not desired a pension.

The outrages of the 6th of October having rendered the flagitious wretches, who had occasioned them, masters of France, I disdained to be dependent on them, and demanded leave, of the commandant at Brest, to resign my commission. The commandant afterwards informed me,

* The hall where the National Assembly now sit, was before they took possession of it, the king's manege or riding-house.

that

that he had imparted my demand to the minister, and requested him to obtain for me from the king, those favours which my rank and situation allowed me to accept. The examination of my demand, and the observations of the commandant, were sent in the month of March, 1790.

In April following, determined by reflections occasioned by the new events which had taken place since the month of October, I sent my plain and simple resignation to Monsieur DE LA LUZERNE, and quitted France.

When Monsieur DE FLEURIEU was appointed minister of the marine department, I wrote to inform him that my name ought to have been struck off the marine list, and that
if

if it appeared there, it could only be through mistake. I declared to him that I renounced my pension ; being resolved not to return at that time to France ; or subject myself to those forms, at the expence of which only the public treasury is now unlocked. Those who believe that the reign of anarchy will never end, might deem this a declaration that I never would return ; but I must here proclaim that I am too much attached to my country, whose misfortunes I bewail, and for which I have made some sacrifices, not to hasten my return as soon as an honest man can there shew himself faithful to his God, to his king, and to those laws which are not crimes reduced into principle and system.

This

This pension, which I am no longer disposed to hold, was granted me in the year 1779, after my being wounded in the *Surveillante**, where I was second in command to Monsieur du COUEDIE. I need not relate the circumstance; if France has forgot it, it is remembered elsewhere; and that remembrance would excite astonishment if I were to degrade myself to preserve a pecuniary provision.

The eclat of the engagement, and my wound, procured me an extraordinary promotion; and I obtained, in 1786, the rank of major of a ship

* In this engagement between the *Surveillante* Frigate, and the *Quebec*, Captain Farmer, of the *Quebec*, was killed; and M. Bintinaye lost an arm, from the shoulder.

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in consequence ; for I cannot attribute to any other cause the favour which I experienced in preference to my comrades, whose example excited my emulation, and whose esteem is my most precious reward.

I must here take the liberty to observe that Mr. Roberts, who was second in command to our brave and unfortunate adversary, has been captain of a ship ever since the year 1782, while I did not obtain the same honour in France till six years after : such is the difference of promotion in the French and English navy. But honour, the true prize of the French noblesse, moderates military ambition as much as it animates military zeal. The English government have no less right to depend

depend on this sentiment, but they leave less for it to perform.

An officer in my situation obtains appointments, that he may retire upon them: my pension was for life; but I judged it my duty to resign it altogether; and these are my reasons for doing so.

Besides my being an officer, I am a member of the States of Brittany. Admitted before the age prescribed by law, into the bosom of that respectable assembly, I was there struck with the wisdom of the laws by which the Provence was governed, and I owe fidelity to those laws of which the two first orders of the States which I am a member of, have remained

the faithful depositaries; and I ought less than another person to submit to an assembly, which, on the faith of a small number of infamous men, the disgrace of their country, and of some surreptitious addresses, has destroyed those laws of which the Bretons will long regret the loss.

What, shall I submit to an assembly, in which virtue and reason can scarcely make their voices heard; and where domineers a vile mob of ingrateful and perfidious courtiers, apostate priests, and crafty agents of faction, who dispute with ignorance, with baseness, and obscurity; whose object being evil, have considered the condescension of granting them all they desired, as a weakness which
they

they should take advantage of ; as a motive for redoubling their violence. Who, in return for the sacrifices made by the king, the noblesse, and the clergy, have thrown the king into chains, and menaced his life daily ; despoiled the clergy of all their property, the noblesse of a part of theirs ; and delivered several members of that body, and their possessions, to fire and sword. Who, inexorable to those who shew the least share of attachment to the throne, or to the laws of the kingdom, are indulgent only to plunderers and incendiaries ; these they blush not to excuse, with the pretence, that they have been misled by false decrees, in order to discover
what

what opinion the people entertain, and to make them their accomplices.

I shall not stay to consider the opprobrium with which my brave comrades are overwhelmed, neither the base corruption to which the useful and esteemable class of sailors have been a prey ; nor shall I dwell upon the absurd code, rejected with contempt, even by those whom it was intended to favour ; my attachment to my profession renders all reflections on these subjects too painful.

But my horror is redoubled by the guilty mixture of hypocrisy and rage, which I see manifested in the persecution raised against religion. Faithful to the oath I took on receiving

ceiving the cross of St. Louis, I glory as much in being a Christian knight, as in being a knight of France; and I sigh at not possessing the power to defend from insolence and oppression our respectable bishops and their worthy co-partners; and the virtuous religious of both sexes, who pray for the people, and are, many of them, prodigal of their charitable care. But they receive from me at least the homage of my respect for their virtues, and of my sympathy for their sufferings.

These are my sentiments; these have determined me to fly a country which is the prey of all sort of crimes, and made me reject with
horror

horror the idea of receiving from
such vile hands any part of a trea-
sure fed by theft and sacrilege.

(Signed)

LE CHEVELIRE DE LA BINTINAYE.

Dated at Bruffels,

May 3d, 1791.

(44)

LETTRE

DE

M. L'ABBÉ RAYNAL,

Lue à l'Assemblée Nationale,

LE 31 MAI.

MESSIEURS,

EN arrivant dans cette capitale, après une longue absence, mon cœur et mes regards se sont tournés vers vous ; et vous m'auriez aux pieds de votre auguste assemblée, si mon âge et mes in-

* B

firmités

firmités me permettoient de vous parler, sans une trop vive émotion des grandes choses que vous avez faites, et de tout ce qui vous reste à faire, pour fixer sur cette terre agitée la paix, la liberté, le bonheur qu'il est dans votre intention de nous procurer.

Ne croyez pas, messieurs, que je sois de ceux qui méconnoissent le zèle infatigable, les talens, les lumières et le courage que vous avez montrés dans vos immenses travaux. Mais assez d'autres vous en ont entretenus ; assez d'autres vous rapellent les titres que vous avez à l'estime de la nation ; pour moi, soit que vous me confideriez comme un citoyen usant de droit de pétition,

tion, soit que laissant un libre effor à ma reconnoissance, vous permettiez à un vieil ami de la liberté, de vous rendre ce qu'il vous doit pour la protection dont vous l'avez honoré ; je vous supplie, de ne pas repousser des vérités utiles ; j'ose depuis longtemps parler aux rois de leurs devoirs ; souffrez qu'aujourd'hui je parle au peuple de ses erreurs, et aux représentans du peuple des dangers qui nous menacent tous.

Je suis, je vous l'avoue, profondément attristé des désordres et des crimes qui couvrent de deuil cet empire. Serait-il donc vrai qu'il fallût me rappeler avec effroi que je suis un de ceux qui, en éprouvant une indignation gé-

néreufe contre le pouvoir arbitraire,
ait peut-être donné des armes à la li-
cence ! La religion, les loix, l'autorité
royale, l'ordre public, redemandent-
ils donc à la philosophie et à la raifon
les liens qui les uniffoient à cette grande
fociété de la nation Françoisfe, comme
fi, en pourfuivant les abus, en rappel-
lant les droits des peuples, et les de-
voirs du prince, nos efforts criminels
avoient rompu ces liens ? Mais non ;
jamais les conceptions hardies de la
philosophie n'ont été présentées par
nous comme la mefure rigoureuse des
actes de la légiflation. Vous ne pou-
vez nous attribuer par erreur ce qui
n'a pu réfulter que d'une fauffe inter-
prétation

prétation de nos principes. Et cependant prêt à descendre dans la nuit du tombeau, prêt à quitter cette famille immense, dont j'ai si ardemment désiré le bonheur. Que vois-je autour de moi ? Des troubles religieux, des dissensions civiles, la contestation des uns, l'audace et l'emportement des autres, un gouvernement esclave de la tyrannie populaire, le sanctuaire des loix environné d'hommes effrénés qui veulent alternativement ou les dicter, ou les braver, des soldats sans discipline, des chefs sans autorité, des ministres sans moyens, un roi, le premier ami de son peuple, plongé dans l'amertume, outragé, menacé, dépouillé de toute auto-

rité, et la puissance publique n'existant plus que dans les clubs, où des hommes ignorans et grossiers osent prononcer sur toutes ces questions politiques.

Telle est, messieurs, n'en doutez pas, telle est la véritable situation de la France. Un autre que moi n'oseroit peut-être vous le dire ; mais je l'ose, parce que je le dois, parce je touche à ma quatre-vingtième année, parce que on ne sauroit m'accuser de regretter l'ancien régime, parce qu'en gémissant sur l'état de désolation où est l'église de France, on ne m'accusera pas d'être un prêtre fanatique, parce qu'en regardant comme le seul

moyen

moyen de salut, le rétablissement de l'autorité légitime, on ne m'accusera pas d'être le partisan du despotisme et d'en attendre des faveurs, parce qu'en attaquant devant vous les écrivains qui ont incendié le royaume, qui en ont perverti l'esprit, on ne m'accusera point de ne pas connoître le prix de la liberté de la presse.

Hélas ! j'étois plein d'espérance et de joie, lorsque je vous ai vu poser les fondemens de la félicité publique, poursuivre tous les abus, proclamer tous les droits, soumettre aux mêmes loix, à un régime uniforme, les diverses parties de cette empire. Mes yeux se sont remplis de larmes, quand

j'ai vu les plus vils, les plus méchans des hommes employés comme instrumens d'une utile révolution ; quand j'ai vu le saint amour du patriotisme prostitué à la scélératesse, et la licence marcher en triomphe sous les enseignes de la liberté. L'effroi s'est mêlé à ma juste douleur, quand j'ai vu briser tous les ressorts du gouvernement, et substituer d'impuissantes barrières à la nécessité d'une force active et reprimante. Par-tout j'ai cherché les vestiges de cette autorité centrale qu'une grande nation dépose dans les mains du monarque, pour sa propre sûreté ; je ne les ai plus retrouvés nulle part, j'ai cherché les principes conservateurs des propriétés ;

propriétés ; et je les ai vu attaqués : j'ai cherché sous quel habit repose la sécurité, la liberté individuelle ; et j'ai vu l'audace toujours croissante de la multitude, attendant, invoquant le signal de la destruction que sont prêt à donner les factieux et les novateurs aussi dangereux que les factieux.

J'ai entendu ces voix insidieuses qui nous environnent de fausses terreurs, pour détourner vos regards des véritables dangers, qui vous inspirent de funestes défiances, pour vous faire abattre successivement tous les appuis du gouvernement monarchique. J'ai frémi sur-tout, lorsqu'observant dans sa nouvelle vie ce peuple qui veut être libre,

libre, je l'ai vu non seulement méconnoître les vertus sociales, l'humanité, la justice, les seules bases d'une liberté véritable, mais encore recevoir avec avidité de nouveaux germes de corruption, et la laisser entourer de nouvelles causes d'esclavage.

Ah ! messieurs, combien je souffre, lorsqu'au milieu de la capitale et dans le foyer des lumières, je vois ce peuple séduit accueillir avec une joie féroce les propositions les plus coupables, sourire aux récits des assassinats, chanter ses crimes comme des conquêtes, appeler stupidement des ennemis à la révolution, la fouiller avec complaisance, fermer les yeux à tous les maux dont

il

il s'accable : car il ne fait pas, ce malheureux peuple, que dans un seul crime repose le germe d'une infinité de calamité ! Je le vois rire et danser sur les ruines de sa propre moralité, sur les bords même de l'abîme qui peut engloutir ses espérances : ce spectacle de joie est ce qui m'a le plus profondément ému. Votre indifférence sur cette déviation affreuse de l'esprit public est la première et peut-être la seule cause du changement qui s'est fait à votre égard, de ce changement par lequel des adulations corruptrices ou des murmures étouffés par la crainte ont remplacé les hommages purs que recevoient vos premiers travaux.

Mais

Mais quelque courage que m'inspire l'approche de ma dernière heure, quelque devoir que m'impose l'amour même de la liberté que j'ai professée avant que vous fussiez ; j'éprouve cependant en vous parlant le respect et la forte de craintes, dont aucun homme ne peut se défendre lorsqu'il se place par la pensée dans un rapport immédiat avec les représentans d'un grand peuple.

Dois-je m'arrêter ici ou continuer à vous parler comme la postérité ? Oui, messieurs, je vous crois dignes d'entendre ce langage.

J'ai médité toute ma vie les idées que vous venez d'appliquer à la régénération

nération du royaume : je les méditois dans un temps, où, repouffé par toutes les institutions fociales, par tous les intérêts, par tous les préjugés, elles ne présentoient que la séduction d'une rive consolante ; alors aucun motif ne m'appelloit à peser les difficultiés d'application et les inconvéniens terribles attachés aux abstractions, lorsqu'on les investit de la force qui commande aux hommes et aux choses, lorsque la résistance des choses et les passions des hommes sont des élémens nécessaires à combiner.

Ce que je n'ai dû ni pu prévoir dans le temps et les circonstances où j'écrivois, les circonstances et le temps où
vous

vous agissez, vous ordonnoient d'en tenir compte ; et je crois devoir vous dire que vous ne l'avez pas assez fait.

Par cette faute unique, mais continue, vous avez vicié votre ouvrage : vous vous êtes mis dans une situation telle que vous ne pouvez peut-être le préserver d'une ruine totale, qu'en revenant sur vos pas, où en indiquant cette marge retrograde à vos successeurs. Craindriez-vous d'emporter seuls toutes les haines qui assaillent l'autel de la liberté ? Croyez, MM. que ce sacrifice héroïque ne sera pas le moins consolant des souvenirs qu'il vous sera permis de garder. Quels hommes que ceux qui, laissant à leur
patrie

patrie tout le bien qu'ils ont su faire, acceptent et réclament pour eux seuls les reproches qu'ont pu mériter des maux réels, des maux graves, mais dont ils pourroient aussi n'accuser que les circonstances ! Je vous crois, MM. digne d'une si haute destinée, et cette idée m'invite à vous retracer sans ménagement, ce que vous avez attaché de défectueux à la constitution Française.

Appelés à régénérer la France, vous deviez considérer d'abord ce que vous pouviez utilement conserver de l'ordre ancien, et de plus ce que vous ne pouviez pas en abandonner.

La

La France étoit une monarchie, son étendue, ses besoins, ses mœurs, l'esprit national, s'opposent invinciblement à ce que jamais des formes républicaines puissent y être admises, sans y opérer une dissolution totale.

Le pouvoir monarchique étoit vicié par deux causes, les bases en étoient entourées de préjugés, et les limites n'étoient marquées que par des résistances partielles. Epurer les principes en affermant le trône sur sa véritable base, la souveraineté de la nation ; poser ses limites en les plaçant dans la représentation nationale, étoit ce que vous aviez à faire, et vous croyez l'avoir fait.

Mais

Mais en organisant ces deux pouvoirs, la force et le succès de la constitution dépendoient de leur équilibre, et vous aviez à vous défendre contre la pente actuelle des idées. Vous deviez voir que dans l'opinion le pouvoir des rois décline, et que les droits des peuples s'accroissent : ainsi en affoiblissant sans mesure ce qui tend naturellement à s'effacer, en fortifiant sans proportion ce qui tend naturellement à s'accroître, vous arriviez forcément à ce triste résultat, *un roi sans aucune autorité, un peuple sans aucun frein.*

C'est en vous livrant aux écarts de l'opinion que vous avez favorisé l'influence de la multitude, et multiplié à

l'infini les élections populaires. N'auriez-vous pas oublié que l'élection sans cesse renouvelée et le peu de durée des pouvoirs sont une source de relâchement dans les ressorts politiques ? N'auriez-vous pas oublié que la force du gouvernement doit être en raison du nombre de ceux qu'il doit contenter et qu'il doit protéger.

Vous avez conservé le nom de roi, mais dans votre constitution il n'est plus utile, et il est encore dangereux. Vous avez réduit son influence à celle que la corruption peut usurper ; vous l'avez pour ainsi dire invité à combattre une constitution qui lui montre sans

seffe

seffe ce qu'il n'est pas, et ce qu'il pourroit être.

Voilà, Messieurs, un vice inhérent à votre constitution, un vice qui la détruira, si vous et vos successeurs ne vous hâtez de l'extirper.

Je ne vous parlerai point de toutes les fautes qui peuvent être attribués aux circonstances ; vous les apprenez vous-même. Mais le mal que vous pouvez détruire, comment le laissez-vous subsister ? comment souffrez-vous après avoir déclaré le dogme de la liberté des impositions religieuses, que les prêtres soient accablés de persécutions et d'outrages, parcequ'ils n'obéissent pas à votre opinion religieuse.

Comment souffrez vous, après avoir consacré les principes de la liberté individuelle qu'il existe dans votre sein une inquisition qui sert de modèle et de prétexte à toutes les inquisitions subalternes, qu'une inquiétude factieuse a semées dans toutes les parties de l'empire.

Comment n'êtes vous pas épouvantés de l'audace et du succès des écrivains qui profanent le nom de patriotes ? plus puissans que vos decrets, ils détruisent tous les jours ce que vous édifiez. Vous voulez un gouvernement monarchique, et ils s'efforcent de le rendre odieux, vous voulez la liberté du peuple, et ils veulent faire du peuple les plus féroces des tyrans, vous
voulez

voulez régénérer les mœurs et ils commandent le triomphe du vice, l'impunité du crime.

Je ne vous parlerai pas, Messieurs, de vos opérations de finance, à Dieu ne plaise que se veuille augmenter les inquiétudes ou diminuer les espérances. La fortune publique est encore entière dans vos mains ; mais croyez bien qu'il n'y a ni impôt, ni crédit, ni recette, ni dépense assurée, là où le gouvernement n'est ni puissant ni respecté.

Et quelle forme de gouvernement pourroit résister à cette domination nouvelle des clubs ? Vous avez détruit toutes les corporations, et la plus colossale et la plus formidable des aggré-

gations s'élève sur vos têtes ; elle dis-
sout tous les pouvoirs. La France en-
tière présente deux tribus très pronon-
cées. Celle des gens de bien, des es-
prits modérés est éparse, muette, con-
sternée, tandis que les hommes violens
se pressent, s'électrifient et forment ces
volcans redoutables qui vomissent tant
des laves enflammée.

Vous avez fait une déclaration des
droits, et cette déclaration imparfaite,
si vous la rapprochez des abstractions
métaphysiques, a répandu dans l'em-
pire François des germes nombreux
de désorganisation et de désordre.

Sans cesse hésitant entre les principes
qu'une fausse pudeur vous empêche de
modifier

modifier, et les circonstances qui vous arrachent des exceptions; vous faites toujours trop peu pour l'utilité publique, et trop selon votre doctrine. Vous êtes souvent inconséquens et impolitiques au moment où vous vous efforcez de n'être ni l'un ni l'autre, c'est ainsi qu'en perpétuant l'esclavage des noirs, vous n'en avez pas moins par votre décision sur les gens de couleur, alarmé le commerce, et exposé vos colonies.

Croyez, Messieurs, qu'aucune de ces observations n'échappe aux amis de la liberté; ils vous redemandent le dépôt de l'opinion publique, dont vous n'êtes que les organes, et qui n'ont

plus aujourd'hui de caractère. L'Europe étonnée vous regarde ; l'Europe, qui peut être ébranlée jusques dans ses fondemens, par la propagation de vos principes, s'indigne de leur exagération.

Le silence de ses princes peut être celui de l'effroi ; mais n'aspirez pas, messieurs, au funeste honneur de vous rendre redoutables par des innovations immodérées, aussi dangereuse pour vous-mêmes que pour vos voisins. Ouvrez encore une fois les annales du monde ; rappelez à votre aide la sagesse des siècles, et voyez combien d'empires ont péri par l'anarchie : il est temps de faire cesser celle qui nous désole, d'arrêter les vengeances,

geances, les séditions, les émeutes, de nous rendre enfin la paix et la confiance.

Pour arriver à ce but salutaire, vous n'avez qu'un moyen, et ce moyen seroit en revisant vos décrets, de réunir et de renfoncer des pouvoirs affoiblis par leur dispersion, de confier au roi toute la force nécessaire pour assurer la puissance des loix, de veiller sur-tout à la liberté des assemblées primaires, dont les factions ont éloigné tous les citoyens vertueux et sages.

Et ne croyez pas, messieurs, que le rétablissement du pouvoir exécutif puisse être l'ouvrage de vos successeurs ; non, ils arriveront avec moins de force que vous n'en aviez ; ils auront à conquérir
cette

cette opinion populaire dont vous avez disposé ; vous pouvez ainsi recréer ce que vous avez détruit ou laissé détruite.

Vous avez posé les bases de la liberté de toute constitution raisonnable, en assurant au peuple le droit de faire ses loix, et de statuer sur l'impôt. L'anarchie engloutira mêmes ces droits éminens, si vous ne les mettez sous la garde d'un gouvernement actif et vigoureux ; et le despotisme nous attend, si vous repoussez toujours la protection tutélaire de l'autorité royale.

J'ai recueilli mes forces, messieurs, pour vous parler le langage austère de la vérité. Pardonnez à mon zèle, à

mon

mon amour pour la patrie, ce que mes
remonstrances peuvent avoir de trop
libre, et croyez à mes vœux ardents pour
votre gloire, autant qu'à mon profond
respect,

GUILLAUME-THOMAS RAYNAL.

(177)

vous gloire, avant qu'à moi procédant
libre et croyez à nos vœux ardens pour
l'humanité, prouvant seule de l'ap
peler à son tour le grand, ce qui n'est

à l'humanité, prouvant seule de l'ap

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DECLARATION

D U

CHEVALIER DE LA BINTINAYE.

J'APPRENDS que je suis l'objet de la calomnie, je dois la repousser. J'exposerai ma conduite et les sentimens qui l'ont dictée.

J'ai su que Monsieur *de Fleury*, d'après une lettre que je lui ai écrite, a
parlé

parlé de moi à l'assemblée du manège, et que quelques misérables impriment qu'en déclarant que je ne rentrerais jamais en France, je sollicite une pension. Ces deux faits sont faux. Je n'ai point déclaré que je ne rentrerois jamais en France, et je n'ai point demandé de pension.

Les forfaits of 6 Octobre ayant rendu maîtres de la France les scélérats qui les avoient tramés, je m'indignai de dépendre d'eux, et j'adressai au Commandant de la Marine à *Brest* la demande de ma retraite. Le Commandant me répondit qu'il avoit fait part de ma demande au Ministre, en le priant d'obtenir pour moi les graces du Roi
dont

dont mon grade et ma position me rendoient susceptible. L'examen de ma demande et des observations du commandant fut renvoyé au mois de Mars, 1790.

Au mois d'Avril suivant, déterminé par les réflexions qui naïssent des nouveaux événemens qui s'étoient succédés depuis le mois d'Octobre, j'envoyai ma démission pure et simple à Monsieur *de la Luzerne*, et je sortis de France.

Lorsque Monsieur *de Flurien* fut nommé Ministre de la Marine, je lui écrivis pour l'informer que mon nom devoit être effacé de la liste de la Marine, et que s'il s'y trouvoit encore,

ce ne pouvoit être que par erreur. Je lui déclarois que je renonçois à ma pension, étant très-résolu à ne pas rentrer en ce moment en France pour m'affujettir aux formalités, au prix desquelles s'ouvre maintenant le trésor public. Ceux qui croient que le regne de l'anarchie n'aura point de terme peuvent croire que je n'y rentrerais jamais. Mais je dois publier que je suis trop attaché à ma Patrie dont je plains les malheurs et pour laquelle j'ai fait quelques sacrifices pour ne pas m'empressez d'y rentrer aussi-tôt qu'un honnête homme pourra s'y montrer fidele à son Dieu, à son Roi, et à des Loix.

Loix qui ne soient pas le crime réduit en principe.

Cette pension dont je ne veux plus, je l'avois obtenue en 1779, après une blessure reçue au combat de la Surveillante où j'étois second de Monsieur *du Couëdie*. Je n'ai pas besoin d'en rappeler les circonstances. Si la France les a oubliées, on s'en souvient ailleurs, et trop pour qu'on ne fut pas étonné de me voir m'avilir pour conserver un traitement pécuniaire.

L'éclat de ce combat et ma blessure me procurerent alors un avancement extraordinaire, et me firent obtenir en 1786 le grade de Major de Vaisseau. Je ne puis attribuer à d'autres motifs la

préférence que j'obtins sur des camarades dont l'exemple étoit l'objet de mon émulation et l'estime ma plus précieuse récompense.

Je me permets d'observer ici que Monsieur *Roberts* qui étoit second de notre brave et malheureux adversaire est Capitaine de Vaisseau depuis 1782. Je n'aurois pas obtenu ce grade en France avant dix ans d'ici. Voilà la différence de l'avancement dans les deux Marines, Angloise et Françoisse. Mais l'honneur, le véritable prix de la Noblesse Françoisse modéroit l'ambition militaire autant qu'il animoit le zele. Le Gouvernement Anglois n'a pas moins

moins le droit de compter sur l'honneur, mais il lui a moins laissé à faire.

Un Officier dans ma position obtenoit ses appointemens pour retraite, ma pension étoit à vie. C'étoit le prix de mon sang. Mais j'ai cru devoir renoncer au tout. Voici mes motifs.

D'abord je suis membre des états de Bretagne. Admis avant l'âge prescrit par la loi dans le sein de cette respectable assemblée, je m'y suis pénétré de la sagesse des loix qui gouvernoient la province. Je dois fidélité à ces loix dont les deux premiers ordres n'ont jamais voulu trahir le dépôt. Je dois moins qu'un autre me soumettre à une assemblée qui, sur la foi

d'un petit nombre de scélérats l'opprobre de leur patrie, et de quelques adresses mensongères, a détruit ces loix dont les Bretons regretteront long-temps la perte.

Quoi ! je me soumettrois à une assemblée où la vertu et la raison peuvent à peine faire entendre leur voix, et où domine une vile tourbe de courtisans ingrats et perfides, de prêtres apostats, et d'astucieux suppôts de chicane qui se disputent d'ignorance, de bassesse, et de noirceur, qui n'ayant que le mal pour but, n'ont vu dans la condescendance à leur accorder tout ce qu'ils avoient demandé qu'un avantage à saisir, et un motif de redoubler de violence ;

violence; qui pour prix des sacrifices faits par le roi, la noblesse et le clergé, ont mis le roi dans les fers et menacent journellement sa vie, ont dépouillé le clergé de tous ses biens, la noblesse d'une partie des siens, et livrent ses membres et ses possessions au fer et aux flammes; qui inexorables pour la moindre trace d'attachement au trône et aux loix du royaume, et indulgens pour les brigands et les incendiaires, ne rougissent pas de les excuser comme trompés par de faux décrets, de reconnoître ainsi l'horrible opinion que le peuple a d'eux et de trahir leur complicité.

Je

Je ne m'arrêterai point sur les opprobres dont on a accablé mes braves comarades, ni sur l'indigne corruption dont l'utile et estimable classe des matelots a été la proie, ni sur ce code absurde rejeté avec mépris par ceux même qu'on a voulu favoriser. Mon attachement à mon métier rend trop douloureuse la réflexion sur ces objets.

Mais ce qui a redoublé mon horreur, c'est le mélange atroce d'hypocrisie et d'acharnement qui se manifeste dans la persécution exercée contre la religion. Fidele aux sermens que j'ai prêtés en recevant la croix de saint

Louis,

Louis, je me fais gloire d'être Chevalier Chrétien comme Chevalier François. Je gémis de ne pouvoir défendre contre leurs insolens et lâches oppresseurs nos respectables évêques, leurs dignes coôpérateurs, les vertueux cénobites des deux sexes qui prient pour le peuple et dont plusieurs lui prodiguent des soins charitables. Qu'ils reçoivent du moins l'hommage de mon respect pour leurs vertus et de ma sensibilité pour leurs souffrances.

Voilà mes sentimens, voilà ce qui m'a déterminé à fuir une terre en proie à tous les crimes, et à rejeter avec horreur l'idée de recevoir par des
mains

(90)

maines scélérates une part d'un trésor
alimenté par le vol et le sacrilège.

Le Chevalier DE LA BINTINAYE.

A Bruxelles le 3 Mai 1791

F I N.



